

November 3, 2008

To: Montana Primary Care Providers
From: Montana Comprehensive Cancer Control Program

Subject: Opportunity to increase colorectal cancer screening rates

Colorectal cancer is almost entirely preventable when recommended screening is accomplished. In 2006, approximately 63% of Montana adults age 50 and older reported participation in recommended screenings. The Montana Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (MCCCCP) estimates that 140,000 Montana adults in this age group are not current for colorectal cancer screening. Furthermore, at current rates of participation in fecal occult blood testing (28%) or endoscopy (53%), the number of unscreened adults will increase to 160,000 in 2020. The goal of screening is to identify individuals at risk so disease can be prevented or found and treated at an early stage. Each primary care practice can help achieve this goal by ensuring that office systems are in place to identify eligible patients and to encourage these patients to be screened.

The MCCCCP has contracted with 13 local health departments across Montana to implement strategies to prevent and control cancer. One strategy is to assist providers with implementing and evaluating an improved office system to increase colorectal cancer screening using tools found in the toolbox: *"How to Increase Colorectal Cancer Screening Rates in Practice: A Primary Care Clinician's Evidence-Based Toolbox and Guide"* (www.nccrt.org). This toolbox was developed by the American Cancer Society, National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable, and Thomas Jefferson University and provides the evidence-based tools and strategies that can move an office practice to a higher level of performance of screening for colorectal cancer. A systematic approach to identify and provide a screening recommendation to every eligible patient who visits a practice for any reason is described in this toolbox. Use of such a systematic approach is likely to increase the screening rate.

Each of the 13 health departments is seeking one pilot site with which to work during the first year of this project. The Montana Medical Association (MMA) and the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) encourage primary care providers to participate in this project to increase the colorectal cancer screening rate in Montana. For practices that do not have a system or for those wishing to update, the toolbox is a good choice. Larry Brouwer, MD, in Hamilton is the ACS Physician Liaison for the toolbox project. He is working closely with the MCCCCP to demonstrate use of the materials in Montana and is available to discuss the toolbox project with interested physicians. You may reach Dr. Brouwer by email ldbrouwer@gmail.com.

We encourage you to consider working with your local health department in the pilot project. Thank you for your consideration.

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